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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004019

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/23/2018
TAGS: [IZ](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT APPROVES ALLIED FORCES RESOLUTION AFTER
DUMPING THE SPEAKER

REF: A. BAGHDAD 4007
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 3940

Classified By: PMIN Robert S. Ford, reason 1.4 (b)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Shia, Kurd and Sunni parliamentarians successfully joined together in forcing mercurial Speaker Mahmoud Mashhadani to resign his position as speaker and member of the Iraqi Parliament. And while most of the day was taken up with behind-the-scenes negotiations to oust him from power, in an anti-climactic and comedically fast process, the parliament took five minutes at the conclusion of business to pass the Resolution on the Coalition Withdrawal, which authorizes Prime Minister Maliki to conclude bilateral agreements allowing the UK, Australia, Romania, El Salvador and Estonia to keep forces stationed in Iraq through July 2009. We are now following up passage of the resolution by ensuring the necessary exchanges of letters occur. End summary.

FAREWELL, GOD MADE ME DO IT, AND DON'T FORGET MY TRAVAILS

[1](#)2. (U) On December 23, after a three-hour wait, Speaker Mashhadani entered the Council of Representatives (CoR) chamber and began the final act of the political theater that has been his trademark. He, First Deputy Speaker Khalid al Attiya, and Second Deputy Speaker Arif Tayfur all took their seats on the speakers' podium. In subdued manner, Mashhadani gave a farewell, an apology, and recited some of his own poetry.

[1](#)3. (U) Mashhadani proclaimed that it had been his honor to work for such a group. He recited a list of martyrs that included the shoe-throwing journalist, Muntadher al Zaidi, and referenced all his loved ones in Camp Bucca (a U.S. detention facility). He also apologized that God had not given him the skill to withstand such affronts as had precipitated his insults (ref). Mashhadani concluded his statement with an official request to resign and retire. Upon his return to the speakers' podium, there was a vote to accept his request. Almost all the members present) only the Sadrists were absent) raised their hands.

WE REALLY LOVED YOU, BUT GO NOW

[1](#)4. (U) Following the vote, the floor began to offer its own apologies, sad feelings and regrets that such a man was leaving. Both supporters (there were few) and detractors (many) offered flowery praise to the "noble" man they had just forced out. This continued until one member departed from the script, and began a religious screed, at which Attiya stood up and thanked Mashhadani for his service. As members flowed from their seats toward the speakers'

podium, Attiya frantically began waving them back to their seats and announced that there was still business.

FIVE MINUTES TO GO: THE COALITION WITHDRAWAL RESOLUTION

15. (U) Attiya announced that there was the issue of the Coalition Withdrawal Resolution. Still yelling to the members to sit, someone from the floor shouted that the resolution was not on the agenda. Attiya then declared a vote to put in on the agenda, called for the vote (at which most members present raised their hands), and declared the vote passed. Realizing that the resolution needed to be read, and still calling for members to sit, Attiya began to read the one-page resolution himself. After one of the fastest readings ever witnessed by the Iraqi parliament, Attiya called a vote, and again, most of the members present raised their hands. There was a salutatory effort to count hands, but then Attiya called the vote passed, the resolution successful and declared the session adjourned until January 9.

COMMENT

16. (C) Our British Embassy colleagues were extremely pleased to get the Allied Forces Resolution passed and said the text caused them no significant problems. We are now following up passage of the resolution by ensuring the necessary exchanges of letters occur.

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17. (C) During his farewell, Mashhadani noted that his decision to resign had been based on a prayer that inspired him. The inspiration may also have derived from the deluge of party leaders conspiring to force his resignation, and from the constant stream of bloc leaders circulating through his office. While some hard-line Sunni Arabs and Sadrists appeared to support him until the very end, even the leaders entered the chamber during his farewell and voted to accept his resignation. The love-fest that followed his speech was notable for the "let-us-now-praise-famous-men" tone all but the last member adhered to. There were some other themes, however, including the call for unity, a unified Iraq, and a search for unity within the parliament. Moreover, given his reference to al Zaidi, Camp Bucca, his sacrifices for Iraq, and the fact that he still has a registered political entity, it is unlikely that we have seen the last of Mahmoud Mashhadani.

CROCKER